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**THREATS TO THE STABILITY OF  
THE US MILITARY BASE POSITION  
IN SELECTED OVERSEAS LOCALITIES**

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*The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and The Joint Staff.*

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**UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD**

*on 21 October 1958. Concurring were the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Director of Naval Intelligence; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff; the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.*

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## S E C R E T

THREATS TO THE STABILITY OF THE US MILITARY BASE  
POSITION IN SELECTED OVERSEAS LOCALITIES

## THE PROBLEM

To identify present and potential threats to the stability of the US military base position in selected overseas localities<sup>1</sup> and to estimate the likelihood of continued US access to these base facilities over the next several years.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The threat to the stability of the base system is greatest in the North African-Near East area, where the host countries have little real sense of sharing common defense objectives with the US, and where powerful forces of radical Arab nationalism strongly oppose the continuation of Western bases. The US has already been forced to accept in principle withdrawal from its bases in *Morocco* and will probably have difficulty in maintaining operational use of these bases over the withdrawal period. Maintenance of our bases in *Libya* and *Saudi Arabia* is linked to the preservation of two shaky dynasties which are vulnerable to pan-Arab pressures and conspiracies and, even if they retain power, may feel compelled to adopt increasingly restrictive interpretations of the pertinent agreements. In *Libya*, at least, restrictions are unlikely to be carried so far as

to compromise the usefulness of US installations, but the future of the US base position will become much less certain after the aging King Idriss dies or is removed from power. While the present Saudi Government will probably not renounce the present Dhahran airfield agreement, it will almost certainly continue to impose severe restrictions on US use of the Dhahran airfield. (*Paras. 7b, 21-33*)

2. We foresee no early threat to the US base position in the three Far Eastern areas considered. The present Governments of *Japan* and the *Philippines* recognize the desirability of close defense ties with the US, and while both countries have displayed increased sensitivity on questions of sovereignty and US base rights, proponents of elimination of the bases are presently in the minority. So long as pro-US elements remain in control in *Japan*, US control of bases in *Japan* and the *Ryukyus* is unlikely to be

<sup>1</sup> These comprise: Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Libya, Spain, Iceland, and Greenland.

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challenged. However, the danger of Communist attack on US bases in the event of war is a source of uneasiness in the Philippines and Japan. The Japanese Government might move to restrict US combat operations from bases in Japan in the event of intensified hostilities in such areas as the Taiwan Strait and unless there were a marked change in popular feeling on nuclear warfare, would probably feel compelled to veto US use of Japanese bases in support of any nuclear warfare operation in the Far East. (Paras. 7c, 34-43)

3. Our position in *Spain* is likely to remain secure for the next several years, although Franco will probably seek a higher *quid pro quo*, particularly if US

withdrawal from Morocco leads to new requests for Spanish facilities. However, the US is under pressure from the Spanish to move some of its bases away from major urban centers, on the ground that they might become targets for enemy nuclear strikes. Denmark will probably continue to provide the US with facilities in *Greenland*. We believe that at least for the next several years the US will probably be able to retain its base position in *Iceland*. However, there is a continuing possibility that nationalist sentiment, at present most likely to be aroused by violence in the fisheries dispute, may grow to such an extent as to force an Icelandic demand for the withdrawal of US forces. (Paras. 11-20)

## DISCUSSION

### I. GENERAL

4. Within the last decade the US has maintained its forward strategic position by a far-flung system of bases in over 36 foreign nations and territories. Despite changes in military technology now in progress, overseas bases continue to play an important role in US strategy and are likely to do so for some years to come.

5. Within the last few years various strains have developed which jeopardize the ability of the US to retain all of its positions or to expand existing facilities. Some difficulties are traceable to the normal frictions which occur when a million US servicemen and approximately a half million civilian employees and dependents are stationed on foreign soil, come into contact with various cultures and peoples with which they are unfamiliar, and maintain a much higher living standard than that of the native population. However, most of these difficulties are subordinate to broader political issues which appear to be gathering force, e.g., the more vigorous assertion of national sov-

ereignty and anticolonialism, and the search for an international position which avoids involvement in the East-West conflict and exposure to nuclear attack. These issues have been exploited by the Soviet Union which from the start has made the US base system a prime target of its propaganda and political warfare.

6. The problems and prospects of the US base system were considered at length in a special report to the President by Mr. Frank C. Nash in November 1957, which remains the primary study in this field.<sup>2</sup> The present estimate briefly reassesses the outlook with respect to bases in nine selected localities, ranging from major operational facilities of a complex nature to single purpose installations.

7. Although the situation in each base complex considered in this estimate has individual features and characteristics, some generalizations can be drawn about the operation of the system as a whole:

<sup>2</sup> "United States Overseas Military Bases," November 1957, with appendix entitled "Country Studies."

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a. The US overseas base position is most stable where there is an identity of the host country's defense objectives with those of the US. This identity of interest is strongest in Europe, but is significant also in such countries as Japan and the Philippines. However, in almost all localities some form of *quid pro quo* from the US in the form of base rentals, military aid, or programs of economic assistance is at least implicitly part of the understanding by which the maintenance of US installations is permitted. The economic advantages which accrue to the host countries under these conditions also operate to preserve the stability of US bases, and in some cases this is a critical element in the equation. Some of the smaller countries have grown so dependent on the dollar support accruing to their treasuries from the presence of US forces, that they would find it difficult to maintain present budgets if the bases were removed.

b. Arab and Asian nationalism represents the principal current threat to the stability of US bases. We have already been forced to accept in principle the evacuation of our forces from Morocco. The maintenance of facilities in Saudi Arabia and Libya is becoming increasingly uncertain. In many instances the governments are vulnerable to nationalist pressures, frequently aroused by outside propaganda. Although some of the governments would prefer not to forfeit the security and economic benefits obtained from the presence of US bases, they are likely to give priority to the necessity of mollifying the demands of local nationalist elements.

c. The possibility of Soviet nuclear attack against US strategic bases is a strong factor in the growing uneasiness over continued presence of US facilities. This general apprehension has given support to the arguments of those who are pressing their governments to adopt policies of nonalignment, especially in non-European areas.

d. A weakening of the US position in one country is likely to set off reactions in several others. In some cases nationalist pressure for termination of US bases will be strengthened. Even where it is not, there is likely to be a

demand for increased benefits in return for base rights, especially if the US should seek additional rights to compensate for those lost elsewhere.

## II. OUTLOOK IN SPECIFIC LOCALITIES

### Greenland

8. In Greenland the US bases are maintained on a basis of cordial cooperation with the Danish Government as part of the common NATO defense effort. Two airfields at Thule and Sondrestrom and smaller naval and communications facilities comprise the current US establishments. Four DEW-line stations will be built next year. In addition the Danes maintain small outposts in Greenland including two Loran stations operated in cooperation with and in support of the US command.

9. There have been no frictions or difficulties over Greenland which have upset US-Danish relations. The tiny local population is almost entirely removed from contact with US forces, and is apparently uninterested in international or political affairs. Given the continuance of close Danish-US ties there should be no serious obstacles to continued full use of the bases.

### Iceland

10. Iceland constitutes a pivotal point in US North Atlantic operations. In the hands of an enemy it would be a definite threat to North American security. US facilities in Iceland consist of the large air base at Keflavik, plus small supporting storage and communication units in a few other localities. In addition, there is a small ground force combat detachment.

11. Iceland has agreed to the presence of US bases and troops on its soil as its contribution to NATO, and in considerable part because of the economic benefits derived therefrom. Because the Icelanders have a strong distrust of foreigners in their midst, US servicemen are carefully separated from the normal stream of native life. The delicacy of the US position is an accepted fact which both countries have learned to live with, but the Communist position within the coalition government enables the party, at any time, to chal-

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lenge the elaborately worked-out *modus vivendi* which now governs the presence of US troops.

12. Although at the moment no outstanding differences exist between the US and Iceland and there has been little agitation over the bases since 1956, the country is caught up in a wave of chauvinism directed largely against the UK as a consequence of the dispute over the 12-mile fisheries limit. All sections of the public and all parties endorse extension of the limit and condemn British action in challenging it. This position has tended to isolate Iceland from its NATO partners; some demands have been made for a withdrawal from the alliance. It seems probable that eventually some accommodation will be worked out which will forestall such a move, but meanwhile nationalist pressures will be on the rise. The US has to date avoided involvement in the fisheries limit dispute. However, because the US does not accept the principle of the 12-mile fisheries limit, and because of its leading position in NATO, it may be difficult to escape Icelandic criticism before the issue is settled.

13. Iceland's curious economic position both enhances and imperils US chances for maintaining its facilities. On the one hand, the influx of dollars through local spending by the base and base personnel, plus extensive US loans to Iceland, have helped support a rising standard of living, marked by a high importation of consumer goods items from the US. Thus there probably would be considerable public reluctance to accept the removal of US bases and subsequent reduction of US imports. On the other hand Iceland's economy as a whole remains dependent on its fishing industry. In preserving its fishing rights and extending its markets, Iceland has sought assistance from all sources, including the USSR. If the USSR should gain further influence in Iceland as a result of increased trade or economic assistance, it would certainly attempt to exert pressures on the government for removal of US bases.

14. We believe that the Icelanders will probably go along with maintenance of the US installations at least for the next few years.

However, there is a continuing possibility that nationalist sentiment, at present most likely to be aroused by violence in the fisheries dispute, may grow to such an extent as to force an Icelandic withdrawal from NATO and termination of base commitments to the US.

## Spain

15. The network of four air bases in Spain constitutes one of the primary SAC establishments in Western Europe. In addition the US maintains a naval air station and fleet facilities, besides smaller communications and other support installations. US-Spanish co-operation has been close and effective. The Spanish Government considers the US presence beneficial because of the economic advantages involved, and because the connection has tended to relax the quarantine placed on Spain by the other West European nations. Franco realizes that US needs in the area constitute his best lever for obtaining further economic aid and continued military assistance in developing the Spanish armed forces. It is probable that Spain will attempt to increase the *quid pro quo* received from the US in return for base privileges.

16. We believe that it is unlikely that US rights in Spain will be disturbed as long as the Franco regime, or a likely successor government, remains in power. However, some US-Spanish friction may be anticipated. As the number of US servicemen and their dependents arriving in Spain grows, it may be increasingly difficult to avoid envious reactions to the high living standards of resident Americans. There is also an impression that the building up of the base system and the stationing of high-spending US troops in Spain has contributed to the country's chronic inflationary difficulties.

17. The US is under pressure from the Spanish to move some of its bases away from major urban centers, on the grounds that they might become targets for enemy nuclear strikes. If the US were to request additional facilities the Spanish Government would probably agree eventually, but at the same time would demand additional economic and military benefits.

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## Morocco

18. The US maintains four SAC airfields and one naval air and fleet base in Morocco under agreements concluded in 1950 with France, which Morocco refuses to recognize as valid. However, the status of US troops and bases is currently the subject of negotiation with the Moroccan Government, and the US has already agreed in principle to evacuate its facilities. The US is attempting to secure a timetable of withdrawal which will enable operations to continue for at least five years. However, the Moroccans are now pressing for a shorter period and also seek to deny the US the strategic use of the bases during the withdrawal period. There is little public or governmental recognition of a mutual interest in Western military operations in Morocco. Furthermore, the Algerian situation engenders a hostile atmosphere. The current political situation in Morocco thus offers little hope that an agreement satisfactory to US interests can be obtained.

19. Morocco represents a classic case of a newly independent country trying to erase reminders of its recent colonial past and to assist its neighbors to achieve a similar status. All major political forces in the country are anxious to remove the remaining French and Spanish installations, and there is a general inclination to regard the US base system as a direct link with the traditional pattern of paternalistic domination by France. Moroccan sensibilities are especially aroused by the widespread conviction that repressive French policies in neighboring Algeria could not be sustained without US assistance programs. Many Moroccans also feel that but for the presence of US bases they would not be involved in the East-West conflict and are unwilling to accept the risk of Soviet nuclear attacks which the presence of these bases might provoke.

20. The foregoing factors, and the probability that radical elements will soon enter the government, make it likely that the Moroccans will insist on a US guarantee that the airfields will not be used for strategic purposes, at least unless the Moroccan Government has given

its prior consent, and on a fairly prompt evacuation of US troops. Even if agreement could be reached on the function of the bases, it is unlikely that the period remaining to the US would exceed three years. Should no agreement be reached, the US might be able to continue operations for a short time under a unilateral declaration of intent to evacuate. To do so would risk government-tolerated harassment and strikes and other forms of resistance by Moroccans employed at the bases and in related port and communication activities. If necessary, the US almost certainly could continue operations under these conditions, but would suffer heavy propaganda losses in so doing. Furthermore, the US has little leverage by which it can reduce these pressures.

## Libya

21. Wheelus Field, near Tripoli, is an important SAC base and the headquarters of the 17th Air Force. The base and supporting facilities are held by the US under a 1954 agreement which gives the US wide rights in the use of the base and also provides for additional US military rights in other areas of Libya, subject to negotiations with the Libyan Government. Although the 1954 agreement runs to 1970 and has no provision for prior modification or termination, in practice Libya tends to consider the validity of the agreement as dependent upon the satisfactory conclusion of annual negotiations with the US over financial assistance as a *quid pro quo*.

22. The Libyan Government's extreme financial dependence on economic and military support from the US (and from the UK which retains important base rights) largely accounts for its acceptance of the long-term agreement for the base and other facilities. There is considerable opposition to these arrangements, especially from pan-Arab nationalist elements, which reject the concept of US bases on Libyan soil as incompatible with Arab solidarity and nonalignment. This opposition has been growing in recent years, stimulated by the flourishing of Arab nationalism in the area and particularly by Egyptian propaganda and agitation. It will probably

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continue to increase. The government has responded to its critics by persistent efforts to get a higher price in return for US use of the base and by strengthening its assertions of Libyan sovereignty in its interpretations of various provisions of the agreement.

23. So long as King Idriss remains in power, the Libyan Government will probably not make serious attempts to reduce or terminate US base rights. It will, however, seek progressively greater financial aid in return, citing its need to placate domestic critics and the repeatedly expressed willingness of the USSR to extend economic assistance to Libya. Domestic and external Arab nationalist pressures will probably impel the government to press for some additional restrictions on US activities, by way of asserting Libya's independence. Such restrictions, irritating though they may be, are unlikely to be carried so far as to compromise the usefulness of existing installations. The government will also probably become increasingly sensitive about US use of Libyan bases in connection with any military operations arising out of troubles in the Arab world. There has been no suggestion as yet that Libya would wish to amend the agreement to require Libyan consent for the use of the base in connection with hostilities, but such a concession in Morocco might lead to similar overtures from the Libyans.

24. So long as it remains in power, the present regime can probably prevent serious threats to the local security of the US base. Local opposition elements, with Egyptian support and guidance, have at least limited capabilities for organizing disorders and sabotage attempts against American installations.

25. Libya's present prospects for stability are limited by dependence on the survival of the aging King. There is also the constant possibility that his regime may be overthrown by an Egyptian-supported nationalist coup. There have been numerous indications of Egyptian subversive activities directed toward this end, though Nasser's government may elect to wait until Idriss leaves the scene before actually attempting to bring about a change of regime.

26. Once Idriss dies or is removed from power, the future of the US base position will become much less certain. His disappearance is likely to be followed by a struggle for power in which nationalist elements opposed to the US base arrangement will make a determined bid for power—with Egyptian support and good chances of success. A government composed of such elements would be likely to seek a drastic modification if not early termination of the base agreement. Even if elements favoring the US connection retain control, there would probably be a weakening of Libya's cohesion and stability.

### Saudi Arabia

27. The only operationally significant installation in Saudi Arabia is the US-constructed Dhahran airfield, where the Saudis afford the US Air Force limited operating rights under an agreement concluded in 1951 and renewed in 1957 for five years. For the most part this agreement restricts US activities to communications and certain transport operations now carried on by a contingent of somewhat under 1,500 men, although the Saudis have authorized some SAC training flights on an individual clearance basis.

28. The Saudis have always been extremely sensitive about any real or apparent infringement of Saudi sovereignty through the exercise of US rights at Dhahran, and have taken pains to make clear that US personnel are there only on Saudi sufferance. There is no doubt that this sensitivity will continue. Since Crown Prince Faisal took over primary direction of the government from King Saud, the regime has sought to come to terms with the forces of radical Arab nationalism now dominant in the area and to mollify growing radical nationalism opposition to the dynasty within Saudi Arabia itself. Since American rights at Dhahran are a target of strong nationalist pressures, the Saudi Government will almost certainly continue to impose restrictions on US operations and personnel. The Saudi attitude toward the Dhahran airfield agreement will probably always include an element of dissatisfaction over the amount and character of US assistance given in return for US use of the field.

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fect concurrently with the peace treaty in April 1952. Although Far East Command Headquarters and the once sizeable ground force garrison were withdrawn in 1957, the US continues to maintain extensive installations in Japan. These include nine principal air bases, two major naval bases, and a variety of supply, maintenance, and support facilities. The US military population in Japan, exclusive of dependents and a sizeable number of US civilian employees, totals over 60,000.

35. The public relations position of US forces in Japan has improved greatly as a result of the withdrawal of US ground forces from Japan, the removal of US forces away from the cities, the return of many controversial base areas, and efforts to extend US-Japanese cooperation in base operational matters. Japanese dissatisfaction with the present defense arrangement is now focused primarily on the rights accorded the US rather than on the presence of US forces and bases in Japan. A point of particular sensitivity is the rights of the US under the present Security Treaty, which at least in theory, enables the US to determine for itself the size, armaments, and movements (including the utilization of US forces in Japan to "contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East") of US forces stationed in Japan without any formal need for consultation with the Japanese and without committing the US to defend Japan. At the same time the Japanese exhibit an almost universal repugnance for nuclear weapons and fear that the existence of US bases on Japanese soil might involve Japan in a future war.

36. Criticism of the present arrangements is expressed most strongly by the leftist-neutralists and the relatively small Communist element, which demand outright abrogation of the Security Treaty. The Socialists, who constitute the major opposition party have, at least for campaign purposes, taken a similar line. However, treaty revision is a political commitment of the Kishi Government. While Kishi strongly advocates close cooperation with the US, he argues that the present treaty, negotiated while Japan was still under US occupation, provides for a patron-client

relationship rather than a genuine partnership as between equals. The Japanese Government's specific demands, which would probably satisfy the majority of the Japanese people, include: (a) the right of either party to terminate the treaty after adequate notice; (b) prior consultation concerning the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japan or the use of US bases or forces in Japan to support military actions elsewhere in the Far East; (c) a commitment by the US to defend Japan; and (d) the elimination in the treaty of references to US participation in dealing with internal disturbances. The Kishi Government's request for treaty revision results in part from the political pressures generated by the Communists and the Socialists, but it is based primarily upon a conviction that the present treaty is inconsistent with Japanese sovereignty, and a fear that Japan might become embroiled in war as a result of the operations of US forces without prior consultation with the Japanese Government.

37. The US bases are heavily dependent upon Japanese labor and transportation for their continued operation. About 85,000 Japanese laborers are employed by US military establishments. With the exception of the two naval facilities, the bases are located away from the coast and are dependent upon the Japanese transportation system and its employees for the movement of supplies. Without the cooperation of Japanese labor the bases probably could not be operated for more than a week. Most of these essential workers belong to unions affiliated with the Communist-infiltrated labor organization Sohyo. Although the Japanese security forces and police could probably control lesser manifestations of labor discontent on the base issue, they might be unable to prevent isolation of the bases and a breakdown of the supply system in the event of widespread violence or a determined strike by organized labor.

38. If negotiations now under way result in a revision of the Security Treaty on terms satisfactory to the Kishi Government, the US base position in Japan can probably be maintained for at least the next five years, especially since successful revision would almost certainly

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bolster the internal position and prestige of Kishi and other moderate conservative proponents of strong ties with the US. However, the Japanese Government might move to restrict US combat operations from Japanese bases in the event of intensified hostilities in such areas as the Taiwan Strait and, unless there were a marked change in popular feeling on nuclear warfare, would probably feel compelled to veto US use of Japanese bases in support of any nuclear warfare operations in the Far East. If there is no treaty revision, the bases could probably be maintained in operation for the next year or two, since the Kishi Government would wish to avoid an open break with the US. In this situation, however, pressure for the elimination of the bases would increase rapidly and would probably become extreme within the next five years.

### The Ryukyus

39. The US maintains major military establishments in the Ryukyus, principally on Okinawa, the largest and most important of the islands. At present, approximately 10,000 Air Force, 5,400 Army, 1,800 Navy, and 15,500 Marines are stationed there. In addition, 2,000 US civilians are employed by the military, and a total of 13,000 US dependents are on Okinawa. The US has full powers of "administration, legislation and jurisdiction over the territory and inhabitants" of the Ryukyus under the terms of the peace treaty with Japan. Although the US has recognized that Japan retains "residual" sovereignty over the islands, it has made clear that the transfer of effective sovereignty to Japan is not likely in the foreseeable future.

40. The continued stability of the US military base position in the Ryukyus is closely linked with the course of US-Japan relations. The Ryukyuans consider themselves to be Japanese, and they are strongly influenced by Japanese policy and public opinion. All Ryukyuan political parties advocate the reinstatement of Japanese civil administration and, ultimately a reversion to full Japanese sovereignty. The Ryukyuan economy is oriented toward Japan, although it now depends

upon US aid and military expenditures, rather than Japanese subsidies, to make up its chronic deficit. Almost all of Ryukyuan export trade and most of its import trade is with Japan. Moreover, US administration of the islands is an important political issue in Japan, where the government and all major parties are pledged to seek the return of Ryukyuan civil administration to Japan. At present, the issue is not acute because the Japanese Government has shown considerable understanding for the US position in the Ryukyus, and because Japanese opinion has been favorably influenced by US efforts to meet Okinawan desires on such issues as the land problem. However, any problems which arise in US-Ryukyuan relations are used by Japanese Socialists and Communists, who maintain close ties with their counterparts in the Ryukyus, to embarrass the Japanese Government.

41. The most important local problem to date has centered on the method of payment for land acquired by the US for military bases and facilities. The Ryukyuans demand continuing payments on a rental basis, rather than a single lump sum payment, and more explicit recognition of their continued ownership of the land. The problem has economic, political, and cultural ramifications. The US has taken nearly 20 percent of the arable land for military uses; many Japanese and Ryukyuans feared that the US method of payment for and taking possession of the land implied permanent US tenure; and the Ryukyuans were reluctant to give up land which had special significance for reasons of tradition or religion. Recent US concessions have reduced these grievances. However, initial US reluctance to meet Okinawan desires on the land issues resulted in political advantages for leftist extremists. The land dispute made it clear that the US could not ignore the wishes of the Ryukyuan people and their government without creating serious local administrative and political problems.

42. Other problems which could become political issues in Japan and the Ryukyus concern the treatment of the 45,000 Ryukyuan workers employed on US bases, and the Ryukyuan

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desire for greater political autonomy and for more diversified economic development. At present, none of these problems is acute and, with some US economic and political concessions, they can probably be kept under control, especially if cooperative conservative leadership continues in Japan.

43. The US base position in the Ryukyus at present is stable and secure because of the extent of US control over the islands, because the Japanese Government in pursuit of its own security and in the interest of good US-

Japanese relations, has not actively exploited the Okinawan issue, and because of the concessions recently made by the US to Ryukyuan wishes on the land issue. The bases are relatively invulnerable to sabotage or economic harassment. The Communists and other anti-US elements can arouse and sustain agitation on popular issues and carry out small-scale acts of sabotage, but they are not a major threat to the security of the US bases. It is almost certain that the US can maintain unimpeded use of the bases during the next five years.

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